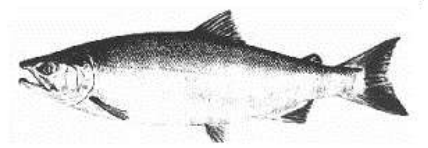


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



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**BRISTOL BAY
2013 OUTLOOK FOR COMMERCIAL
SALMON FISHING**

INTRODUCTION

This document is provided as a guide to fishermen, processors, and the public. The intent of this document is to provide the reader with general information regarding the 2013 Bristol Bay salmon season. Included is a short narrative regarding general framework for management of each of the five major districts, the 2013 salmon forecast, and a brief summary of regulation changes adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) in December 2012 and March 2013.

During the season, Bristol Bay salmon fishing announcements are broadcast on marine VHF Channel 07A and 2509 MHz SSB. Current fishing announcements are aired on local radio stations – KAKN and KDLG. Regular announcement times that may be utilized are 9:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, 3:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., and 8:00 p.m., unless otherwise stated. Information is also available via telephone; for east side fisheries (Naknek-Kvichak, Egegik, and Ugashik), dial **246-INFO (4636)**, for west side fisheries (Nushagak and Togiak) dial **842-5226**. The direct line from the Dillingham boat harbor will be operational in late April and is located on the west end of the harbormaster's house. Fishermen are asked to note new office hours at the Dillingham fish and game office will be 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday from June 3–June 21, and again after July 19. From June 22–July 19 weekday office hours will be the same as above, but weekend office hours will be from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon.

Regarding blue and green district registration cards, set gillnet permit holders are only required to fill out and return green cards if they fish in the Nushagak District. Drift gillnet permit holders that fish in the Ugashik, Egegik, and Naknek-Kvichak Districts will not need to fill out and return a blue card prior to June 25. Set gillnet permit holders in the Nushagak District and drift gillnet permit holders in the Nushagak and Togiak Districts must fill out and return the appropriate blue

and green district registration cards prior to commercial fishing. Blue and green permit district registration cards will be available at the Anchorage, King Salmon, and Dillingham offices beginning May 1. In addition, PDF files of blue and green district registration cards are posted on the Bristol Bay homepage and can be printed, completed, mailed to the address on the printout, or submitted to Anchorage, King Salmon, or Dillingham office personnel. During the 2013 season, catch, escapement, and announcements will be available at the same site (<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareabristolbay.salmon>).

Fishermen and processors should be aware of the reporting requirements in 5 AAC 06.377 (b) that state:

“Each commercial fisherman shall report, on an ADF&G fish ticket, at the time of landing, the number of Chinook and coho salmon taken but not sold.”

2013 REGULATORY CHANGES

1. After thorough discussion at the December 2012 and March 2013 meetings the board did not renew the regulation allowing set gillnet permit holders to operate two permits. As a result, a set gillnet permit holder may operate only a single S04T gillnet permit. The permit holder may not fish more than 2 separate gillnets and no net may be more than 50 fathoms.
2. Set gillnet permit holders fishing in the Nushagak District are required to register their permit, including stat area, prior to fishing (green card).
3. At the March 2011 board meeting, the drift gillnet dual permitting process was changed. Both permit holders planning on utilizing the dual permit option must register as a dual permit operation with the department prior to fishing, however, it takes only one permit holder to notify the department when they terminate the dual permit partnership.
4. If the department opens the Wood River Special Harvest Area, (WRSHA) it will be opened for only one gear type at a time with a ratio of three (3) drift gillnet openings for every one (1) set gillnet opening. In addition set gillnet fishermen are not restricted to a specific distance from shore though they are still restricted to a distance between nets.
5. Drift gillnet fishermen may have up to 200 fathoms of gear on board when in the WRSHA but any gear over 75 fathoms must be in a bag.
6. In the Nushagak District, the department may institute a mesh restriction of 4.75 inches or smaller for the protection on Nushagak bound sockeye salmon.
7. For the conservation of Chinook salmon, the department shall, to the extent practicable, open and close commercial fishing periods for drift gillnet gear in the Naknek-Kvichak District between the seven-foot flood and the seven-foot ebb tide stages, as measured at the mouth of the Naknek River.
8. The Togiak River Section boundary near the Togiak River was **changed for drift gillnet fishing only for the period of June 1 through July 15** (set gillnet permit holder operations are not affected by this change). This new line runs approximately from Togiak Fisheries Inc. to the mouth of the Kurtluk River at 59°03.19' N. lat., 160°20.18' W. long. to 59°01.76' N. lat., 160°28.17' W. long.

9. The northwest boundary of the Togiak River Section near the Togiak River referred to in 5AAC 06.350(3)(1) was changed to be those waters of the Togiak River upstream of a line from 59°03.33' N. lat., 160°20.08' W. long. to 59°03.58' N. lat., 160°22.60' W. long.
10. Dual drift permit holder operations are no longer permitted in Togiak District.
11. At the March 2013 meeting, the board made changes as to when Area T permit holders may fish in the inner portion of the Cinder River Section (river and lagoon) and Inner Port Heiden sections. The board adopted proposals that would allow Area T permit holders to fish within the inner portion of the Cinder River Section and Inner Port Heiden Section during all months when open by regulation. For further information contact ADF&G in Port Moller at 907-375-2716.

Alaska Wildlife Troopers – Summer 2013 Outlook – Bristol Bay

Enforcement Priorities:

- Continued strong focus on fishing district lines and open period enforcement, particularly in the Naknek/Kvichak and Egegik districts using all available assets to include aircraft, rotorcraft, large and small enforcement vessels and undercover fishing vessels.
- Routine boardings of drift gillnet and processor vessels to verify licensing and permitting regulations are met. Fishermen and processors are reminded that at the time of delivery of fish, a fish ticket must be generated and must include the signature of a company representative and the full name and signature of the CFEC permit holder. The permit holder must be present at the time of delivery in order to sign the fish ticket. Crew members cannot sign fish tickets for permit holders.
- Increased enforcement of state boating safety laws in cooperation with the US Coast Guard.
- Increased Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT) presence in the Ugashik and Togiak Districts.

SALMON OUTLOOKS

BAYWIDE

The forecasted Bristol Bay sockeye salmon run for 2013 is approximately 26.3 million fish. Based on the forecast, 16.6 million fish are potentially available for commercial harvest (Table 1). However, run timing will be the key factor as to when fishing will occur. The department manages fisheries based on inseason information regarding abundance. The inseason management approach uses a suite of tools to provide abundance information in each district as each run develops and is used by the department to determine fishing opportunity.

The commercial salmon season in Bristol Bay opens June 1 by regulation. Fishing in eastside districts will be allowed using a weekly schedule that will vary by district. The schedules are in place to balance fishing opportunity with escapement in the early part of the season (particularly for Chinook salmon). As each run develops and sockeye salmon run characteristics become defined within individual districts, fishing time will be adjusted accordingly. In the Nushagak District, management of the Chinook salmon fishery will govern fishing time in the early part of the season,

followed by directed sockeye salmon management as abundance dictates.

NAKNEK/KVICHAK DISTRICT

An inshore run of approximately 10.6 million sockeye salmon is expected for the Naknek/Kvichak District in 2013. Based on the forecast, the projected harvest in the Naknek/Kvichak District is approximately 5.6 million sockeye salmon; 2.4 million from the Kvichak River, 1.0 million from the Alagnak River and 2.2 million from the Naknek River. The 2013 Kvichak River escapement goal will be 2.5 million. If the run is greater than the forecast, the **inseason** point goal will be adjusted to reflect the actual inseason total run. The Naknek River escapement goal range is 800,000 to 1.4 million. Sockeye salmon returning to the Naknek/Kvichak District are predicted to be 40% age-1.3, 24% age-1.2, 22% age-2.2, and 13% age-2.3 fish.

To begin the season, the Naknek Section only will be open to drift gillnet gear, and for set gillnet gear both the Naknek and Kvichak Sections will be open beginning June 3. Fishing time during the first 3 weeks of June will be 4 days per week from 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Friday, beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday, June 3 and ending 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 21. Permit holders participating in the Naknek/Kvichak District salmon fishery should be advised that once sufficient run strength appears in the district they may be put on short notice.

There is the possibility of escapement falling behind schedule in the Kvichak River. In order to reduce the harvest of Kvichak River stocks, the department may restrict fishing to the flood portion of the tide only, from the 7-foot level to high water slack.

With limited information and low abundance over the past 5 years, special attention will be given to Chinook salmon run strength and effort levels. A mesh size restriction of 5.5 inches or less will be in effect beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday, June 3 until 9:00 a.m. Friday, July 26, to help in the conservation of Chinook salmon.

During closures, there may be extensive use of district test fishing boats. Additional volunteer test boats might be needed because of this increase in test fishing. Permit holders interested in district test fishing in the Naknek-Kvichak District should contact Slim Morstad at (907) 246-3341 in King Salmon.

EGEGIK DISTRICT

A forecasted run of approximately 6.1 million sockeye salmon is expected for the Egegik River in 2013. The escapement goal range is 800,000 to 1.4 million sockeye. Based on the forecast, the expected surplus potentially available for harvest is 4.7 million fish. Approximately 53% of the run is expected to be age-2.2 fish, followed by age-2.3 (25%), age-1.3 (19%) and age 1.2 (less than 1%).

In 2013, separate gear openings and extensions will be used to adjust harvest in an attempt to achieve allocation percentages. Fishermen are reminded that regulation directs the department to avoid “to the extent practicable”, continuous fishing with set gillnet gear in the Egegik District, and that Egegik set gillnet fishermen in should expect breaks in fishing.

Based on the Kvichak River sockeye salmon forecast, fishing will begin in the full Egegik District. The season will start with a 3 day per week schedule that will be in effect through June 14. The primary reason for returning to the 3 day per week schedule is to provide for Chinook salmon escapement. By emergency order, commercial fishing will be allowed in the Egegik District from 9:00 a.m. Monday, until 9:00 a.m. Wednesday and from 9:00 a.m. Thursday

until 9:00 a.m. Friday. This schedule will be in effect beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday June 3 and run through 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 14. After June 15, fishing will be scheduled according to sockeye salmon run strength. As in previous years, some openings could occur on short notice. Periods will be adjusted to allocate harvest between drift and set gillnet gear groups.

In addition, subsistence fishing will be permitted in the waters of the Egegik commercial district from midnight June 1 until 11:59 p.m. Friday June 14. The department will consider additional directed subsistence openings but will wait until inseason to announce the timing of those openings.

The department does not produce Egegik River coho salmon run forecasts. Assessment of escapement is done through aerial surveys, however during the time coho salmon are inriver weather conditions frequently make aerial surveys difficult. In 2009, surveys were not flown due to bad weather so no assessment of the escapement for that year is available. In 2013, management of the fall coho fishery will be based on fishery performance and run strength indicators.

UGASHIK DISTRICT

The forecasted Ugashik River sockeye salmon run in 2013 is 3.5 million fish. The escapement goal range is 500,000 to 1.2 million sockeye. Based on the forecast, 2.6 million fish are potentially available for harvest. Approximately 45% of the run is expected to be age-1.2 fish, 28% age-1.3, 17% age-2.2, and 10% age-2.3 fish.

The Ugashik District allocation plan specifies 10% set and 90% drift. As in previous years separate gear openings and commercial period length adjustments will be used to address allocation between gear groups in 2013. With limited information and low abundance over the past 5 years, special attention will be given to Chinook salmon run strength and effort levels. A mesh size restriction of 5.5 inches or less will be in effect beginning 12:01 Saturday June 1 until 11:59 p.m. Monday, July 22, to help in the conservation of Chinook salmon.

Beginning 9:00 a.m. Monday June 3, commercial fishing in the Ugashik District will be allowed on a 9:00 a.m. Monday to 9:00 a.m. Friday schedule through 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 14. With an expected run to the Kvichak River that exceeds a 40% exploitation rate above the minimum escapement goal stipulated in regulation, fishing time after June 15 will be allowed under E.O. authority and will depend on fishery performance and run strength indicators. Permit holders should note that the regulation restricting opportunity to no more than 48 hours between June 16 and June 23 will not be in effect in 2013.

The department does not produce Ugashik River coho salmon run forecasts. Assessment of escapement is done through aerial surveys. The parent year for the 2013 coho run was the 2009 escapement, however, because of weather conditions surveys were not flown so no assessment of the coho escapement for that year is available. In 2013, management of the fall coho fishery will be based on fishery performance and run strength indicators.

At the March 2013 meeting the board made changes as to when Area T permit holders may fish in the inner portion of the Cinder River Section (river and lagoon) and Inner Port Heiden sections. The board adopted proposals that would allow Area T permit holders to fish within the inner portion of the Cinder River Section and Inner Port Heiden Section during all months when open by regulation. For further information contact ADF&G in Port Moller at 907-375-2716. Area T permit holders who fish the Cinder River and Port Heiden sections and deliver their catch in the Ugashik District are reminded to report the section of catch on the appropriate fish tickets.

NUSHAGAK DISTRICT

The variable escapement goal adopted for the Nushagak River is contained in the Wood River Special Harvest Area (WRSHA) Management Plan. This plan directs the department to achieve sockeye salmon escapements within the escapement goal range of 370,000 to 760,000 when the preseason forecast is greater than 1 million fish. If the preseason forecast is below 1 million fish, then an Optimum Escapement Goal (OEG) minimum of 260,000 sockeye salmon is in effect when the ratio of Wood River to Nushagak River sockeye salmon is projected to exceed 3:1. During the first week of July, the department assesses Nushagak River sockeye salmon run strength through July 1 and adjusts the escapement goal based on that assessment. If the sockeye salmon forecast to the Wood and Nushagak Rivers for 2013 (3.42 million and 1.31 million respectively), is accurate, the likelihood of fishing in the WRSHA is decreased.

Nushagak River Chinook salmon are managed according to the Nushagak/Mulchatna Chinook Salmon Management Plan. This plan directs the commercial fishery to be managed for an inriver goal of 95,000 Chinook salmon. Based on the poor performance of Chinook salmon statewide, and the poor run to the Nushagak in 2010, a directed Chinook salmon opening is unlikely. However, if inseason assessment of subsistence catches and escapement past the Nushagak sonar indicates a larger than expected run, a directed Chinook opening could occur.

The 2013 forecast for sockeye salmon in the Nushagak District is 5.25 million fish, 1.75 million for escapement and 3.31 million potentially available for harvest in the Nushagak commercial salmon fishery. The total run by river system is Wood River 3.42 million (escapement goal range 700,000 to 1.5 million), Igushik River 0.52 million (escapement goal range 150,000 to 300,000), and Nushagak River 1.31 million (escapement goal range of 370,000 to 760,000). Approximately 32% of the forecasted run is expected to be age-1.2 sockeye salmon, < 4% age-2.2, 62% age-1.3, and < 3% age-2.3 fish.

Management strategies for 2013 include: 1) directed Chinook salmon openings only if warranted by escapement. 2) Igushik Section sockeye salmon openings are likely to begin in the third week of June and will likely be set gillnet only until escapement or strong harvests dictate otherwise, and 3) begin fishing in the regular district in late June with short openings. Openings will be scheduled based on sockeye salmon escapement levels in the Nushagak and Wood rivers. Mesh size will be limited to 5.5 inches or smaller unless Chinook salmon escapement is above expectations. If the Nushagak River sockeye salmon escapement decreases relative to expected escapements the department may first warn and then impose the 4.75 inch mesh restriction in the Nushagak District. Subsequently, if Nushagak River sockeye salmon escapement falls below the expected 370,000 fish curve, then the department may utilize the WRSHA to protect Nushagak River sockeye salmon. Commercial openings in the district may follow as allowed by escapement levels in the Nushagak River.

Permit holders are reminded that there were significant changes made to the WRSHA management plan. The changes require separate gear type openings, and allocation will be done by a ratio of openings (3:1) for the different gear types. Other changes include restrictions regarding where and how set gillnets may be set and the amount of gear allowed on board set or drift gillnet vessels. Please be sure you understand all regulations before participating in any fishing activities.

Igushik River sockeye salmon will be managed independently of the Nushagak/Wood River sockeye salmon stocks. Set gillnet fishing will begin in the Igushik Section when there is a market available. Initial openings will be 8 hours per day and additional time will be added if

large harvests or escapement information indicate more time is warranted. Drift gillnet openings in the Igushik Section will be added as needed to control sockeye salmon escapement. Igushik River sockeye salmon returns can be quite variable relative to forecasted run strength. Management will incorporate a readiness to respond with increasing early set gillnet openings, and an attempt to maintain the 6% sockeye harvest allocated to the Igushik Section set gillnet group by only adding drift gillnet openings as needed.

In 2013, there is no forecast of the coho salmon run to the Nushagak River. The department will switch to coho salmon management around July 23 when sockeye salmon harvest decreases. The department will use enumeration information from the Nushagak River sonar project to determine what amount of fishing time is warranted.

District test fishing for inseason management may be conducted periodically depending on run characteristics. Permit holders interested in test fishing in the Nushagak District should contact Tim Sands in Dillingham at (907) 842-5227.

TOGIAC DISTRICT

The 2013 inshore run of Togiak River sockeye salmon is forecast at 590,000 fish, down considerably from the 2012 forecast of 780,000. The Togiak District Salmon Management Plan (TDSMP) calls for sockeye salmon escapement of 150,000 fish past the counting towers located at the outlet of Togiak Lake. Based on the forecast, approximately 390,000 sockeye salmon will potentially be available for commercial harvest. Approximately 25% of the run is expected to be 2-ocean fish and 75% is expected to be 3-ocean fish.

Commercial fisheries in the Togiak District are managed under the Togiak District Salmon Management Plan (TDSMP). The plan restricts permit holders from fishing in the Togiak District until July 27 if they have fished in any other district in Bristol Bay, and conversely, restricts permit holders from fishing in any other district until July 27 if they have fished in the Togiak District. The plan also increases the weekly fishing schedule in the Togiak River Section between July 1 and July 16, and restricts mesh size to 5.5 inches or smaller between June 15 and July 15 for the conservation of Chinook salmon.

Chinook salmon run strength in the Togiak River has been considered below average for several years. Adequate Chinook salmon escapement in most years can be attributed to mesh size restrictions in late June and early July, as well as to reductions in the weekly fishing schedule during late June. Anticipating another poor Chinook salmon run, reduction to the weekly fishing schedule is again likely for the 2013 season. These reductions will likely limit commercial fishing to between 48 and 72 hours of fishing time during each of the last two weeks of June. Additionally, as in 2012, a mesh size restriction for Chinook salmon conservation may be in place throughout July. Fishermen are also reminded of changes to Togiak regulations adopted at the 2012 board meeting (see regulatory changes section above, numbers 8, 9, and 10). The Kulukak Section weekly fishing schedule, reduced to 60 hours at the 2009 BOF meeting, is unlikely to be changed in 2013.

Coho, pink, and chum salmon returns are not formally forecast in the Togiak District due to a lack of sufficient age class information and accurate escapement data. If a market for coho salmon is present, a conservative harvest strategy will be utilized due to the lack of information about the returning coho salmon run.

Table 1.-Forecast of total run, escapement and harvest of sockeye salmon returning to Bristol Bay River systems in 2013.

Millions of Sockeye Salmon							
DISTRICT River	Total Run Forecast by Age Class				Total	Escapement	Total Harvest
	1.2	2.2	1.3	2.3			
NAKNEK-KVICHAK:							
Kvichak	1.31	1.65	1.39	0.74	5.08	2.54	2.36
Alagnak	0.50	0.19	1.29	0.10	2.08	1.04	0.96
Naknek	0.77	0.52	1.61	0.55	3.46	1.10	2.23
Total	2.57	2.35	4.30	1.39	10.61	4.68	5.55
EGEGIK	0.16	3.22	1.18	1.49	6.06	1.10	4.74
UGASHIK	1.59	0.59	1.00	0.35	3.53	0.80	2.60
NUSHAGAK							
Wood	1.49	0.15	1.70	0.08	3.42	1.00	2.30
Igushik	0.15	0.02	0.34	0.02	0.52	0.25	0.25
Nushagak	0.03	0.00	1.20	0.02	1.31	0.50	0.76
Total	1.67	0.17	3.24	0.11	5.25	1.75	3.31
TOGIAK	0.11	0.04	0.41	0.03	0.59	0.18	0.39
BRISTOL BAY	6.10	6.38	13.10	3.37	26.03	8.50	16.59